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Comments on the DIA Revised Study of Communist External Logistical Requirements in South Vietnam

DIA's estimates -- prepared in March 1966 -- of the external logistical support for VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam are substantially higher than the working estimates prepared by ORR. Three basic assumptions of DIA which differ from those of ORR account for the disparity: (1) DIA has assumed that the combat support element of 17,000-18,000 men and the 13,000 VC local forces are dependent on external sources for Classes II and IV, and Class V supplies; (2) DIA has estimated a requirement of 0.5 lbs per man per day for Class V supplies for NVA forces operating in South Vietnam under current combat conditions, an allowance some 1.5 times the comparable requirement for the VC and that estimated by ORR for both VC and NVA forces; (3) DIA has made an additional allowance of 8 tons per day for Class I supplies consumed by 10,500 porters and infiltrators enroute to South Vietnam.

ORR has consistently estimated that neither combat support forces nor local forces have requirements for external support of any significance, a position stated in a footnote to Appendix A, SNIE 10-12-65. The combat support element of 17,000-18,000 men is composed of personnel from COSVN Headquarters and regional and provincial headquarters, as well as a number of combat engineering personnel, reconnaissance and transport specialists, and production and liaison personnel. VC local forces consist of an estimated 13,000 troops organized into units separate from the VC main force. The nature of these forces suggests that supplies can be obtained internally, at least under current combat conditions.

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The higher DIA estimate for Class V supplies for NVA forces is based on the belief that NVA forces are better equipped than VC forces. However, ORR notes that more and more of these units are engaged in joint operations with VC units, and that NVA cadre personnel actually are assigned to VC units, thus suggesting comparable expenditures of ammunition by both VC and NVA forces.

With respect to food supplies for porters and infiltrators, ORR cannot understand why this requirement should be regarded as a proper addition to the requirement for Communist forces in South Vietnam from external sources. It is our understanding that this food is consumed enroute to South Vietnam and not within the country. Moreover, DIA has applied an external requirement of 8 tons of food supplies to current and escalated levels of combat and to the current and projected orders of battle. ORR estimates that this requirement, if accepted, would increase under escalated levels of combat and/or the projected order of battle because a proportional increase in the number of porters and infiltrators would be required.

ORR also questions DIA's methods of interpolation or extrapolation. The external requirements in pounds/man/day for a level of combat of 1 day in 15 as calculated by DIA are not consistent with the requirements estimated for the higher and lower levels of combat. ORR has extrapolated to obtain requirements of NVA forces for Class V supplies at a level of combat of 1 day in 7, whereas DIA has accepted a MACV estimate. Other differences between DIA and ORR estimates not explained heretofore probably are arithmetic in nature.

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The following tables compare: ORR and DIA estimates of external logistical requirements of Communist forces in South Vietnam under various assumptions as to level of combat and order of battle.